



the **centre** for **volunteering**  
*igniting community spirit*



# *Governance of NSW Not-for-Profit Organisations*

June 2010

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## Executive Summary

In 2008 The Centre for Volunteering (The Centre) evaluated the issue of optimal board size. This evaluation and subsequent discussions revealed a general need for a broader baseline understanding of governance in Not-for-Profit (NFP) organisations, board size being just one aspect of this. This led to the decision to conduct an expanded research project including the other aspects of board operation, such as:

- Aspects of good governance, e.g. strategy and direction setting, mission and values, risk management, accountability, legal aspects, performance measurement
- Aspects of the board e.g. recruitment and retention of directors, time and effort required, experience and training, performance of directors
- Relationship of the executive with the board
- Relationships between board members, board members and chair
- Effective controls and communication, e.g. role of the chair, effective reporting and imparting the strategic vision to the organisation.

This report on The Centre 2009 Governance of NSW Not-for-Profit (NFP) Organisations is the result of an on-line survey of CEO's, Executive Officers and Board members of 700 NSW NFP organisations. The organisations varied in size, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition of size by employee numbers, from small - less than 20, medium - between 20 and 200 and large - more than 200 full time equivalent (FTE) paid employees.

The survey population included a wide variety of NSW NFPs and they were not selected specifically because they were volunteer organisations. However, of the participating organisations 133 utilised volunteers in 2008 with some having less than 20 while others had more than 1,000 volunteers.

A total of 140 respondent organisations operated in the following segments of the NFP sector of NSW participated in the survey:

- Community Services /Welfare
- Education/Youth Services
- Health
- Arts/Culture/Heritage
- Conservation/Environment/Animal Welfare
- Other

Some respondents indicated that their organisation also operated in multiple locations in NSW.

The study makes the following recommendations:

1. A dialogue should be opened between the NFP sector and Funding bodies to increase the understanding and value of effective board operation. The Centre can lead this debate in volunteering organisations however it should be wide spread throughout the NFP sector and lead by government.
2. Funding applications should include a component dedicated by NFPs assist those governed by boards/management committees improve board member recruitment practices and training.
3. Funding applications should include a component dedicated by NFPs assist those governed by boards/management committees improve board training.
4. Boards should consider regular performance evaluation.
5. The Centre should debate with the Government the necessity of regulatory changes and any adverse financial impact changes may have.

# Introduction

## Definition - what is meant by Good Governance?

There are a number of definitions available, but there is no *'one-size-fits-all'* view. The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) view on good governance offers a reasonably comprehensive outline:

“What does good governance look like on NFP boards?

- There is a clearly defined purpose and strategic direction for the organisation with goals and objectives and this is communicated to all relevant stakeholders.
- The board's role is similarly well defined
- The board is aware of its duties and responsibilities, the legislation under which it operates, and has appropriate documentation of policies and procedures
- Board composition reflects the skills, knowledge and experience needed to achieve the organisation's purpose
- Boards should manage financial responsibilities – establish policies and delegations, set criteria/indicators of good financial health and ensure management reports on this to each board meeting, determine financial priorities, etc.
- There is adequate D&O insurance.”<sup>1</sup>

## Scope of Study

This report contains the results of a survey conducted during 2009 of CEO's, Executive Officers and Board members of 700 NSW Not-for-Profit organisations. The organisations varied in size, as defined by the ABS definition of size by employee numbers, from small - less than 20, medium - between 20 and 200 and large - more than 200 full time equivalent (FTE) paid employees.

A total of 140 respondent organisations operated in the following segments of the no-for-profit sector of NSW participated in the survey:

- Community Services /Welfare
- Education/Youth Services
- Health
- Arts/Culture/Heritage
- Conservation/Environment/Animal Welfare
- Other

In 2008 133 participating organisations also utilised volunteers with some having less than 20 while others had more than 1,000 volunteers (see Figure 7).

The survey was directed to organisations in areas of NSW and some respondents indicated that the organisation also operated in multiple locations in NSW.

While the NFP segment of Sport and Recreation<sup>2</sup> has a large number of volunteers much of this activity is centred on family/children's schooling and sporting activities as is

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), 'Role of the board in not-for-profit organisations', [http://www.companydirectors.com.au/NR/rdonlyres/363B03EA-B624-4E5D-976A-565D4EDDAF67/0/DUTY13\\_RoleOfTheBoardInNFPs.pdf](http://www.companydirectors.com.au/NR/rdonlyres/363B03EA-B624-4E5D-976A-565D4EDDAF67/0/DUTY13_RoleOfTheBoardInNFPs.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Volunteers in Sport, Australia, 2006 (ABS Cat. No. 4440.0.55.001)

demonstrated by the fact that the demographic profile is different for Sport and Recreation versus other NFP segments that utilise volunteers. Due to this the Sport and Recreation segment were not included in the study because it would not have allowed a suitable comparative analysis with the organisations targeted in the study.

Emergency service organisations were not included in the study because most operate under different legislation from the sample population and would have introduced bias into a comparative analysis of the survey responses.

## Results

Of the 700 organisations originally selected for participation in this survey, 97 surveys were returned as “undeliverable”, 5 informed The Centre that they did not wish to participate in the research and a further 8 not on the original mail list contacted The Centre to participate in the survey. This meant 140 individuals responded at least partially to the questionnaire. Accordingly, a total response rate of 20% was achieved. The findings in this section are based on those choosing to participate in the survey.

### ***Survey Participant and Sector Demographics***

Figure 1 describes the NFP sector from which our respondents were drawn. A total of 132 respondents answered this question.

**Figure 1 Not-for-Profit Sector of Respondent organisations**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Community Services /Welfare	72	54.5
Education/Youth Services	19	14.4
Health	10	7.6
Arts/Culture/Heritage	9	6.8
Conservation/Environment/Animal Welfare	4	3.0
Other	17	14.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100.0</b>

There were a significant number of organisations which did not neatly fit into one of the conventional categories. For full details of the type of organisations contained under this heading see Appendix 1.

The breakdown of respondents by sector correlates very well with the membership of the Centre for Volunteering, (see below) although the target population was much broader than the Centre’s membership. Unfortunately it is not possible to determine what proportion of respondents were also members of the Centre.

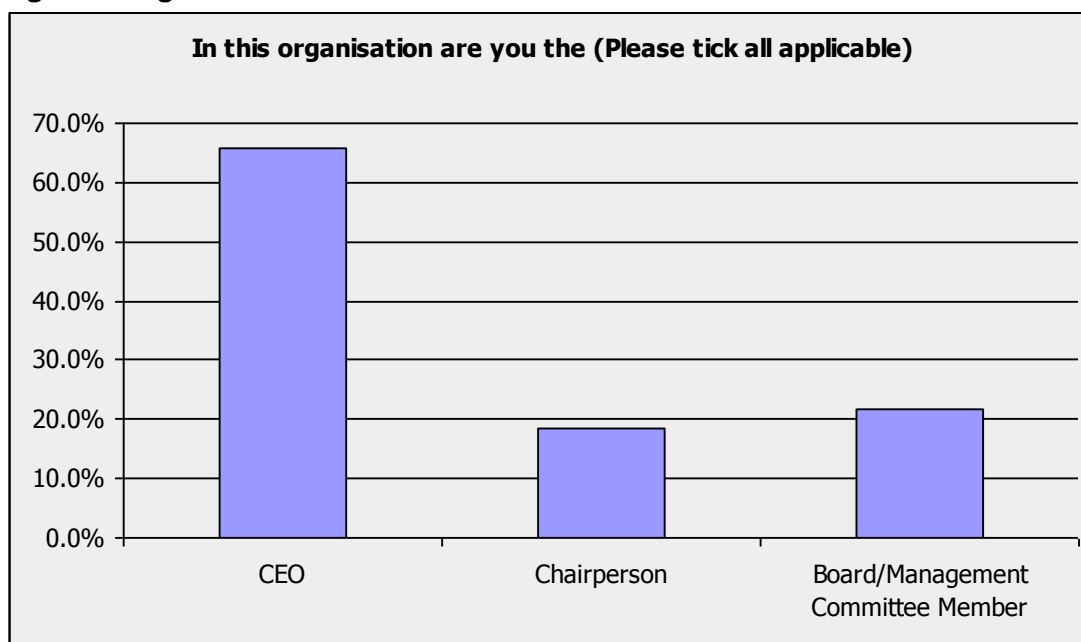
**Figure 2 Membership – Centre for Volunteering**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Community Services/Health/Welfare	311	62.2
Education	35	7.0
Arts/Culture/Heritage	41	8.2
Conservation/Environment/Animal Welfare	15	3.0
Other – Individuals	52	10.4
Emergency Services/Safety	1	0.2
Sport/Recreation	15	3.0
Corporate	30	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Figure 3 describes the position of our respondents within their respective organisations, and in particular their Board status. It is interesting to observe that the majority of respondents were CEOs. Indeed, only 22% of respondents were neither the CEO nor Chairperson of their organisation. It is interesting to speculate on the extent to which these individuals serve as gatekeepers – how many have passed on our request for

participation to other Board members who are those most likely to experience the effect, positive or otherwise, of the governance processes in place.

**Figure 3 Organisational Role**



## Board Size and Committee structure by sector

Board size and structure are widely accepted components of good governance. Figure 4 identifies the size of the Boards represented within the survey.

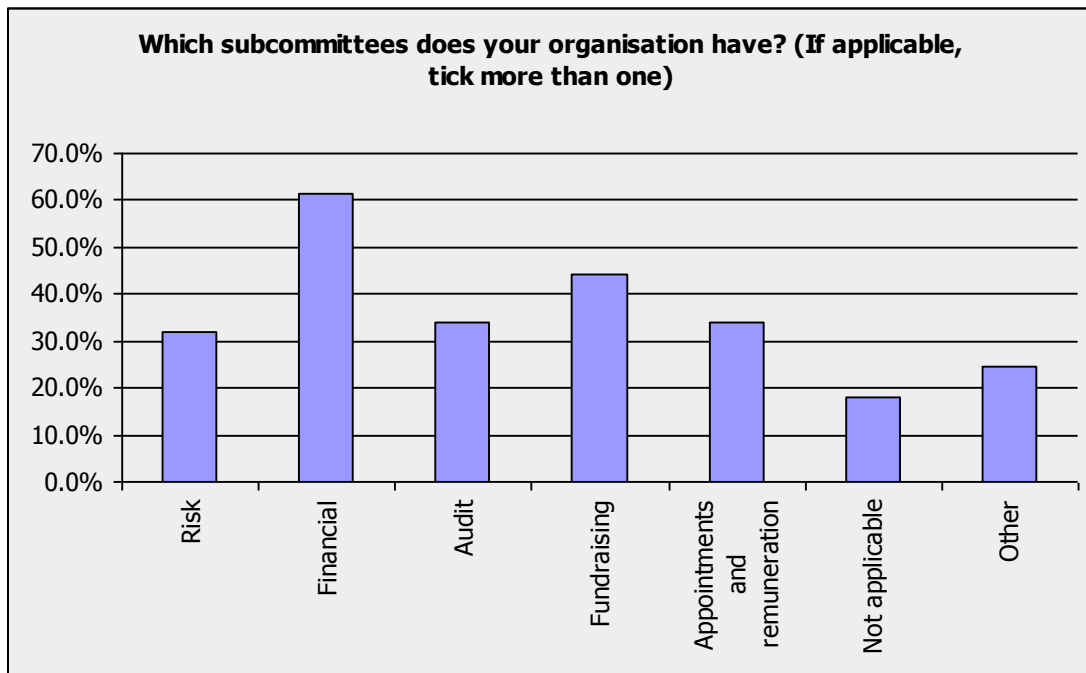
**Figure 4 Board Size**

How many members are on your Board/Management Committee (include current vacancies)?			
	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
No.	9.89	1,256	127

The average Board size was 9.89 members. While Board size ranged from three to 26 members, these were both extremes. Most organisations had Boards well within the range deemed appropriate for good governance (usually cited as between 8-12 members).

Most of our participant organisations have a range of Board sub-committees, the most typical being the Finance sub-committee. In those organisations which do have sub-committees it is also fairly common to have a fund-raising committee. Substantial proportions also have Risk, Audit, and Appointments committees. See Figure 5.

**Figure 5 Board Sub Committees**

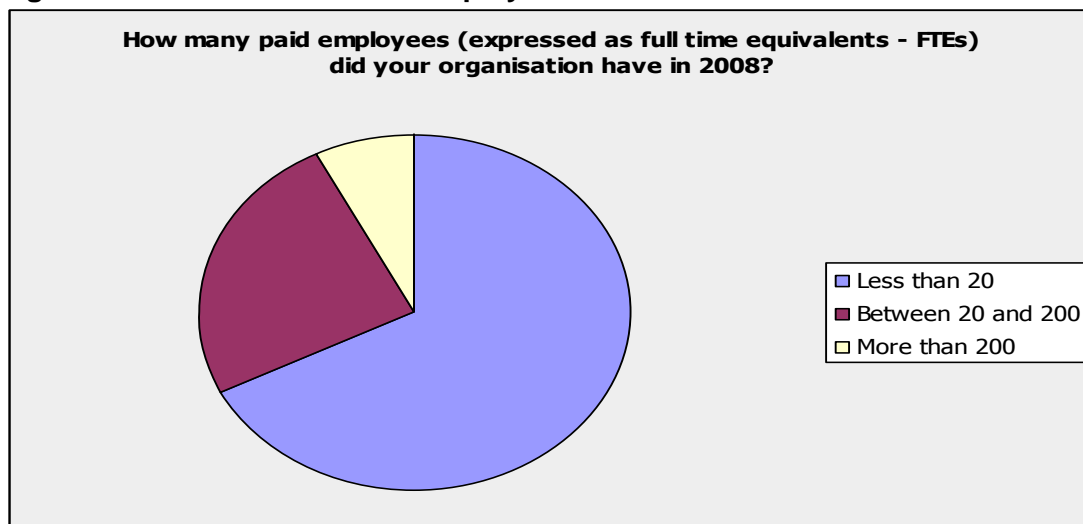


A broad range of other committees were identified as being in place, including: Governance and policy, Marketing, Asset Management, Mission, Strategic Planning, OHS, Fleet Management, and Building Management.

## Number of Employees and Volunteers, by sector

Figure 6 describes the size of organisation represented within the survey. Most (67%) were small organisations with less than 20 employees. However, at the other extreme, substantial percentages (7.6%) were large organisations with over 200 employees.

**Figure 6 Number of Paid Employees**



**Figure 7 Number of Volunteers**

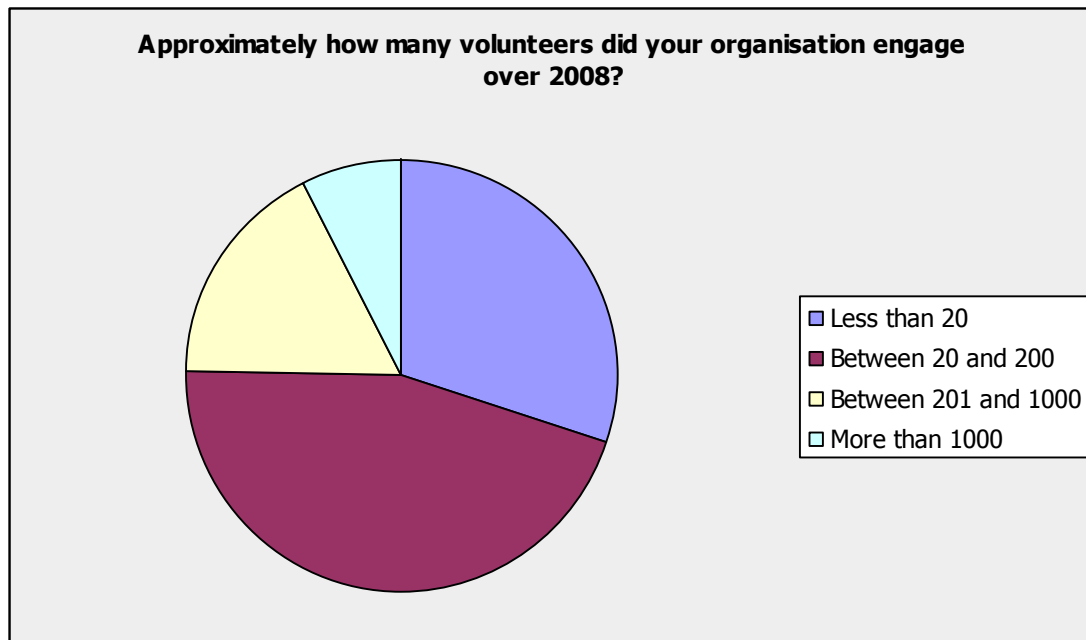
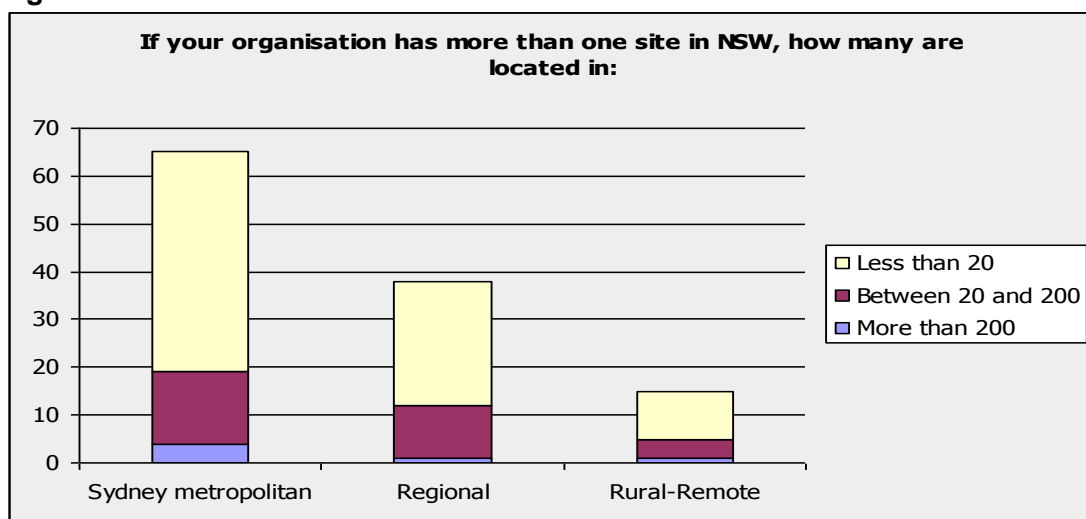


Figure 7 presents a similar analysis for the number of volunteers deployed within the respondent population. While a substantial percentage (30%) have less than 20 volunteers, the largest proportion (45%) have between 20 and 200 volunteers and interestingly, 7.5% of our sample have over 1000 volunteers.

## Number of Locations

As is clear from Figure 8 below, most organisations operate out of a single location. Of those (74) organisations which have more than 1 location, 65 had a number of locations in NSW but mainly in the metropolitan area. However a substantial proportion (38) operates regionally in NSW and a smaller proportion (15 of the total) operates in remote NSW.

**Figure 8 Number of Locations**



## Source and recruitment of new Board/Management Committee Members

Figure 9 identifies the source of new Board/Management Committee members. The overwhelming majority are recruited by invitation, and by networking. Very few are recruited by external advertising or via recruitment agencies. This raises another potential issue regarding the extent to which board member selection procedures are independent and free from bias. To what extent are Boards self-perpetuating?

**Figure 9 Source and Recruitment of New Board Members**

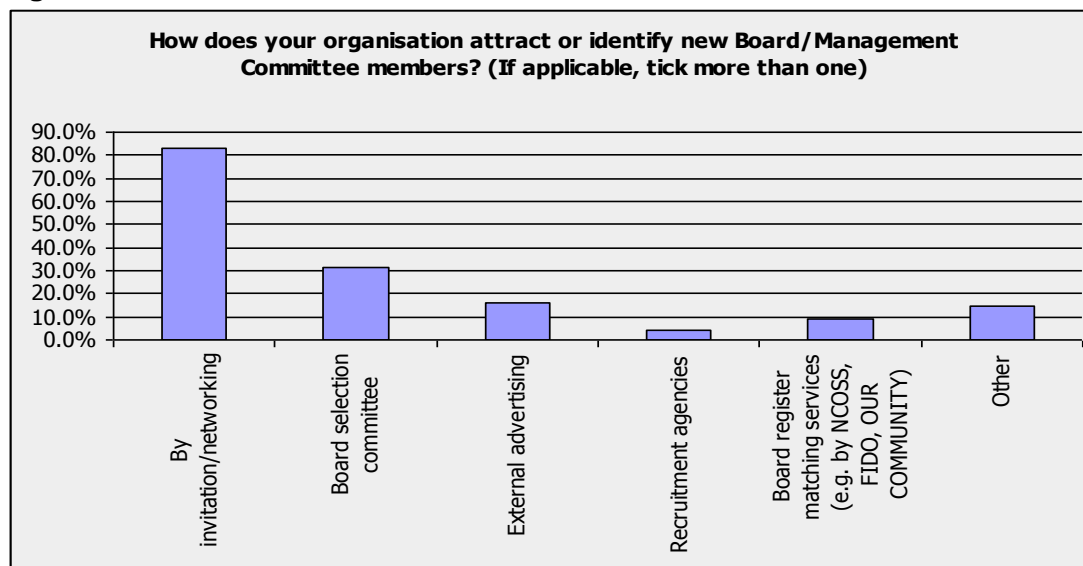


Figure 10 seeks to corroborate the above finding, by asking respondents to identify how they were personally recruited to their current Board.

**Figure 10 Recruitment Method**

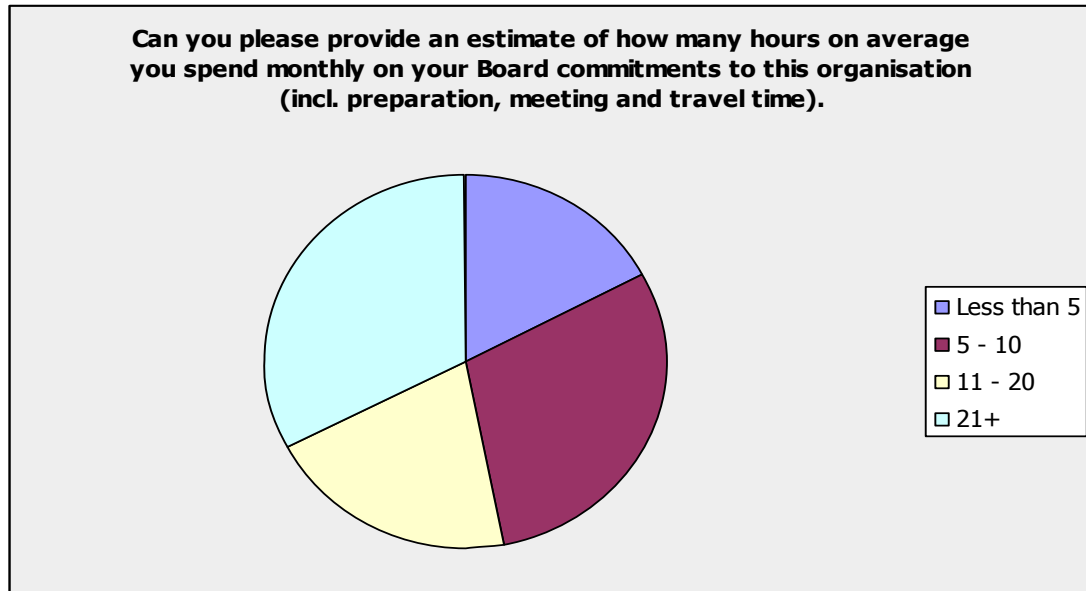
How did you become a Board/Management Committee member of this organisation?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Founder of organisation	23.0%	14
By invitation/networking	36.1%	22
Board selection process	14.8%	9
External advertising	3.3%	2
Recruitment agencies	3.3%	2
Board register matching services	1.6%	1
Other	18.0%	11
(please specify)		15
answered question		61
skipped question		79

If they were NOT the founder of the actual organisation, the most common response was that members were recruited by networking or by invitation, thus corroborating the recruitment practices recorded in Figure 8.

## Hours spent on Board commitments

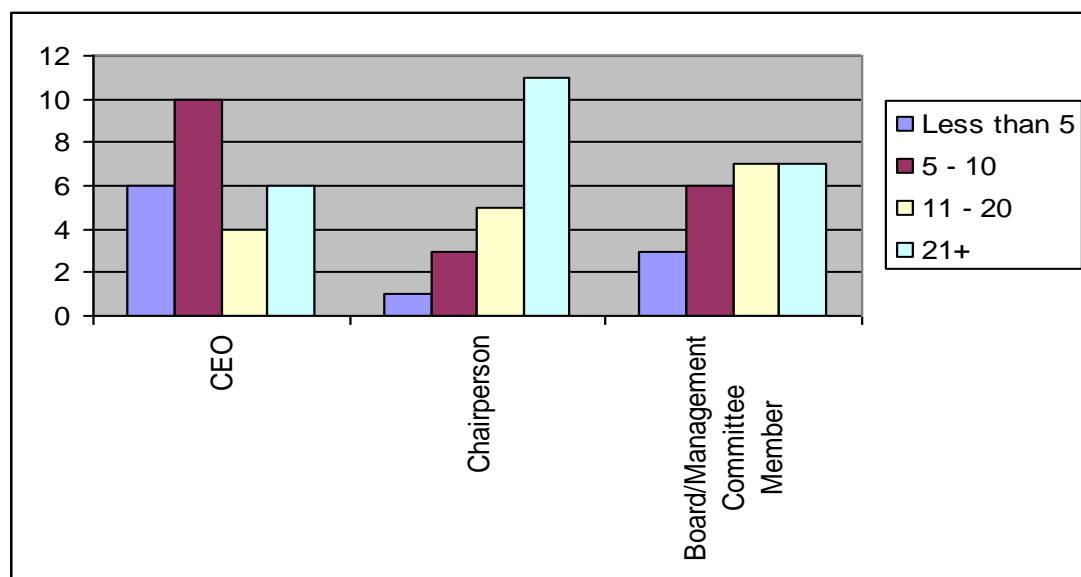
Respondents were asked how many hours they spent on Board or Committee work. As is clear from Figure 11 there was a wide range of level of involvement. The largest proportion spent over 21 hours a month (possibly reflecting the large number of CEO and Chairperson participants) but the second highest proportion spent between 5-10 hours a month.

**Figure 11 Hours spent on Board activities**



Chairpersons were most likely to spend a considerable amount of time on their board activities, as is clear from Figure 11A below. Board members and CEOs time commitment appear to be broadly similar.

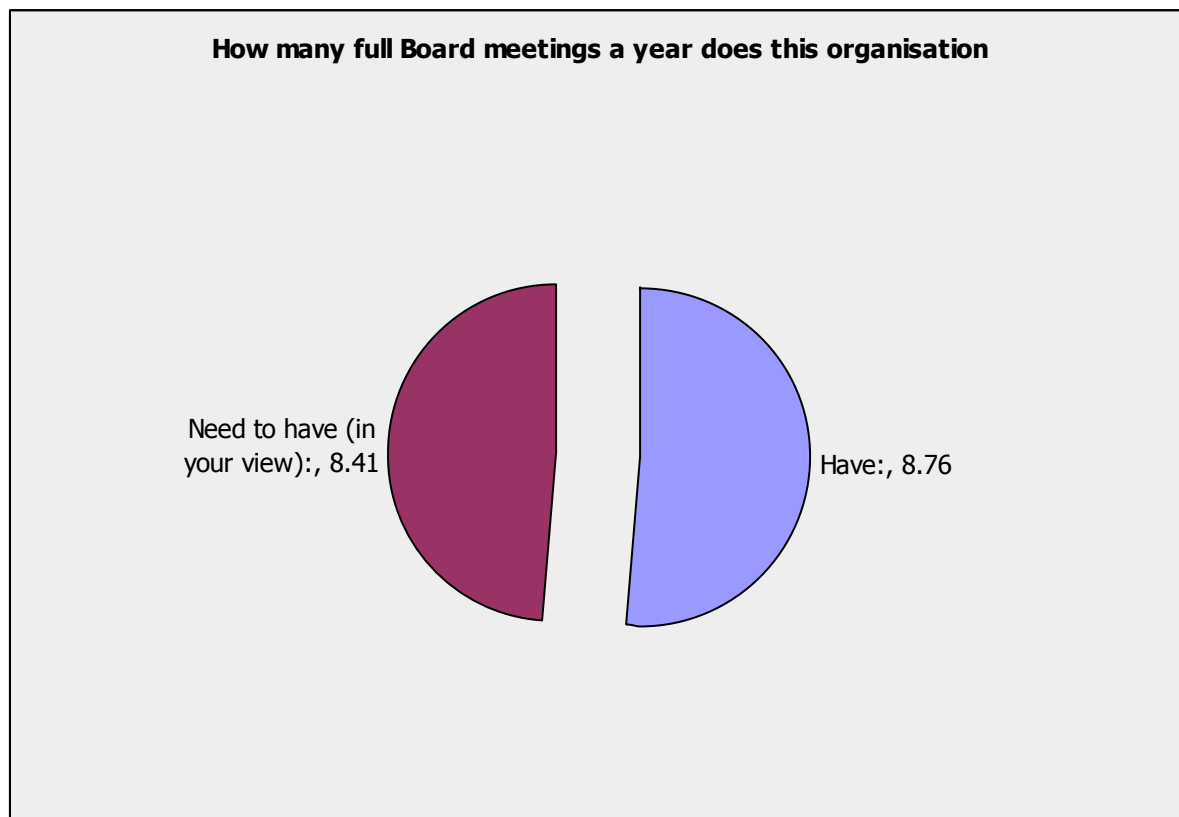
**Figure 11A Board commitment by Board Role**



## Number of Board meetings

Figure 12 summarises the number of board meetings held per year, indicating firstly the actual number held and secondly the number respondents felt SHOULD be held. As it turns out, the number of meetings would seem to be regarded to be about right. The number of meetings actually held each year averaged 8.76, and the number respondents felt should be held averaged 8.41 per year.

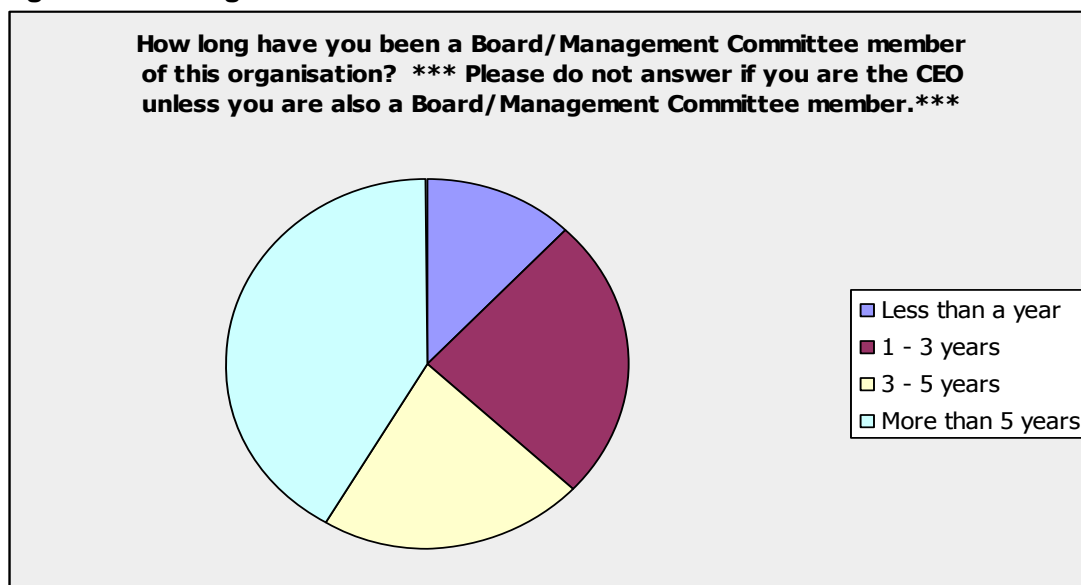
**Figure 12** Number of Board Meetings per year



## Length of Service as Board member

As shown in Figure 13, most Board members had been on the Board for over 3 years and indeed a very large number had been on the Board for over 5 years. This finding applied across all types of Board role. It is not possible to determine from the actual question asked precisely how long Board members have actually been in place, as low Board turnover can be a reflection of governance inertia. This issue may be worthy of further exploration.

**Figure 13 Length of time as Board member**



## Board Experience

Participants are fairly experienced Board members – 99 of the total participants are on or have served on, other Boards, including an average of 1.94 private/ NFP Boards and 2.99 NFP Boards. This raises another potential issue. Does this finding suggest that there may be too high a level of co-relationships across the sector? Are the same subsets of individuals involved? How is Board membership refreshed? (See Figure 14.)

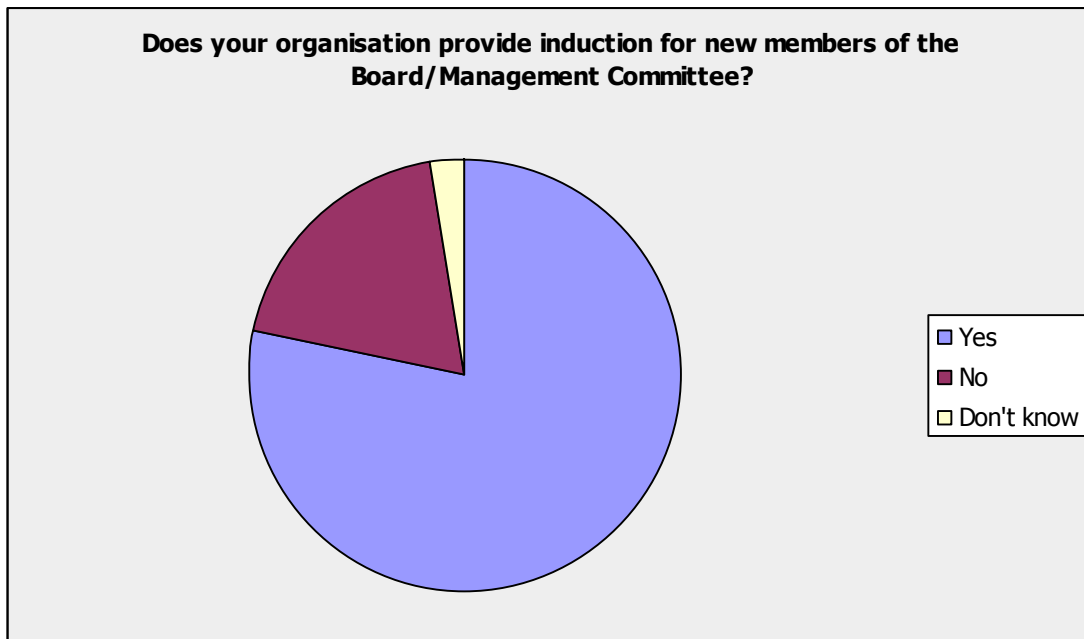
**Figure 14 Number of Boards Served on.**

How many Boards/Management Committees have you served on? Please include past and present			
	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Not-for-profit	2.99	293	98
Government	2.44	88	36
Private/For-profit	1.94	66	34
answered question			99
skipped question			41

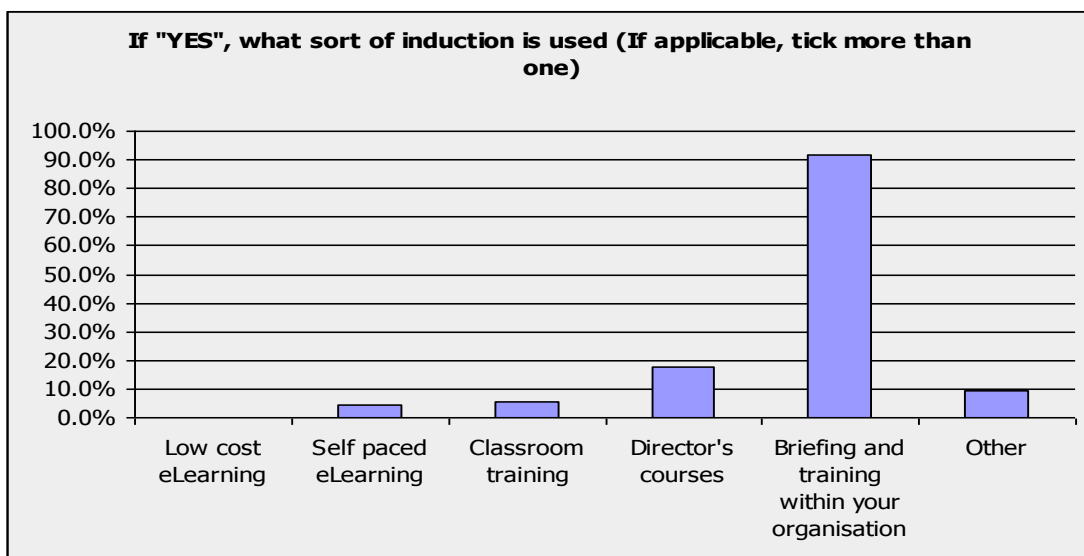
## Induction/Training

Respondents were asked about induction and training. Most did offer/were provided with training and induction, (See Figure 15). As shown in Figure 16, the training received has typically been in the form of an internal briefing, although 18% have also attended Directors' Courses.

**Figure 15 Induction**



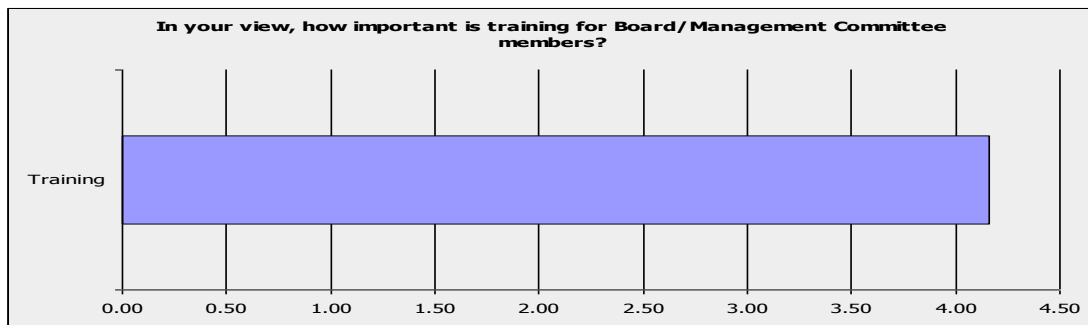
**Figure 16 Type of induction**



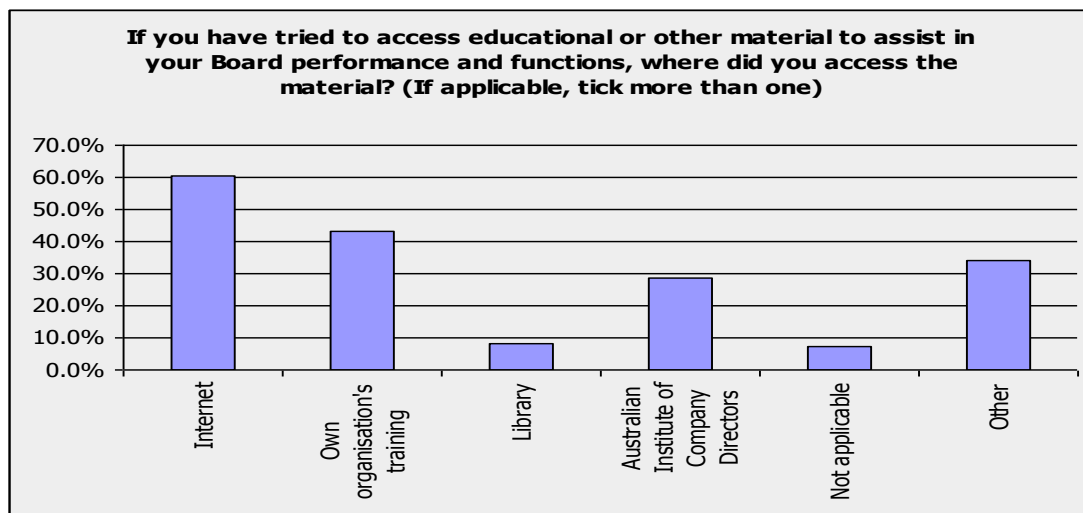
Board members were very conscious of the importance of appropriate training (Figure 17), and a substantial proportion had accessed additional training material via the internet, the Institute of Directors' website or the library. (Figure 18)

### Figure 17 Importance of Training

94% of respondents rated training for Board/Management Committee members as important to very important. This equates to an average score of 4.16 from a maximum score of 5.



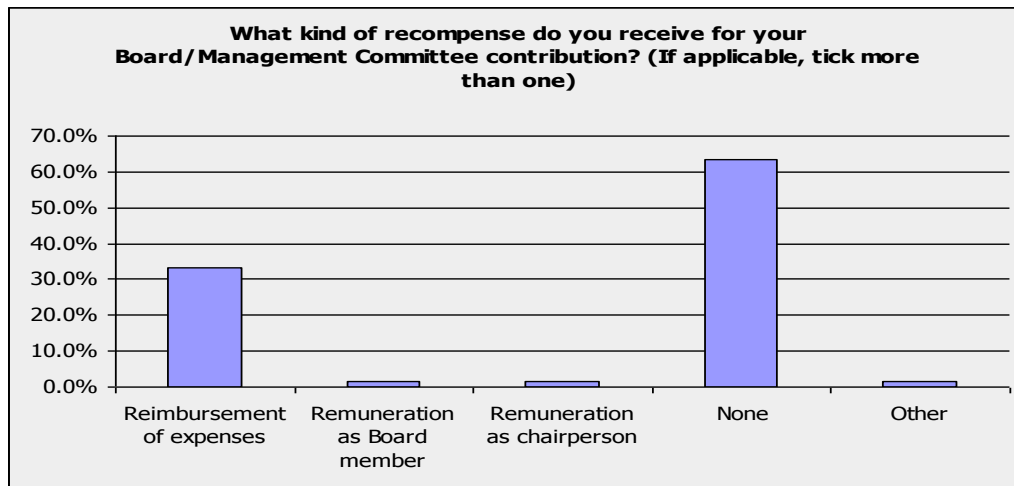
### Figure 18 Source of Training Material



### Reimbursement

Few respondents received any remuneration for their service on the Board, although about a third received reimbursement of expenses incurred.

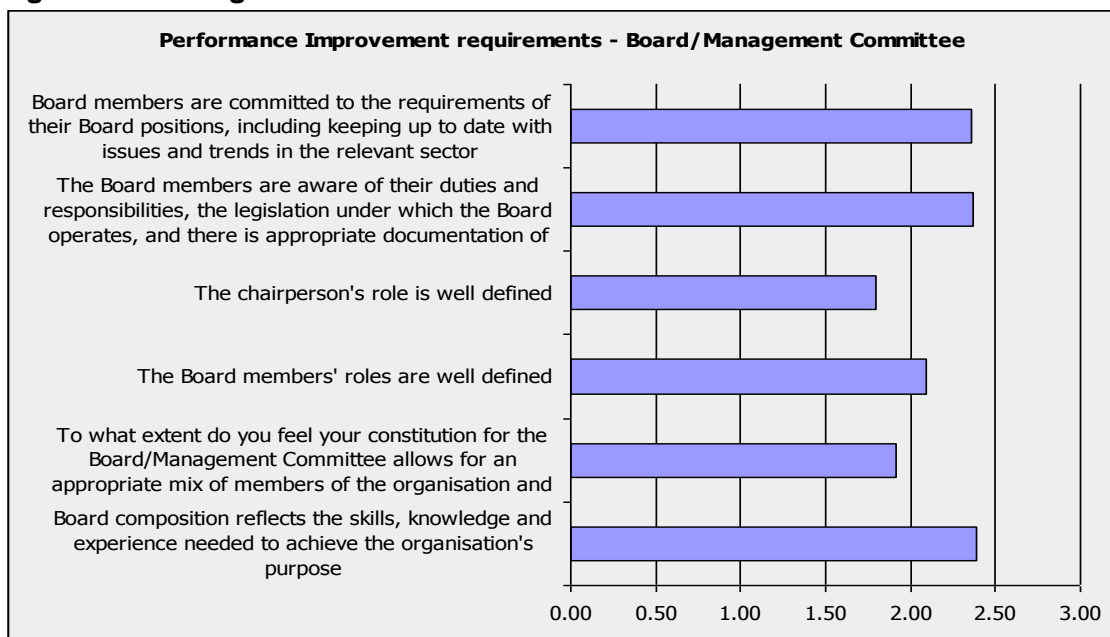
**Figure 19**



## Rating of Board Performance

Figure 20 outlines the ratings of a number of aspects of Board performance for the survey population as a whole. The scale used for these ratings was 1 = No improvement required, through to 5 = Significant Improvement required. It is clear from this chart that the highest ratings were given to Board commitment to duties, Board skills, and awareness, and the lowest to Chairperson’s skills.

**Figure 20 Rating of Board Performance - Roles**



This data was analysed further, by sector, in Figure 21. As is clear from this figure, the Chairperson’s role was generally seen as well defined and needing relatively little improvement, whereas the most improvement was in Board member commitment, Board member awareness of the requirements of their role, and Board composition and skills. This could be the result of the poor recruitment practices observed earlier in the report.

There were substantial differences between the sectors in rating the effectiveness of their Boards. Arts/Culture/Heritage respondents were consistently the most critical of all

sectors, with the lowest ratings for all these dimensions. In contrast, Education and Youth Development were consistently the most positive.

As regards which of these dimensions was the most in need of improvement, all sectors were consistent in identifying Board composition and commitment as major areas for improvement

As regards the ability of the constitution to allow an appropriate mix of skills – there was a divergence of views across the sectors. Conservation/Environment and Animal welfare deemed this to require little improvement, whereas Arts/Culture and Heritage were more likely to believe that improvements were required.

All sectors were reasonably comfortable with the definition of Board member roles. As regards the Chair's role, there was more divergence, with Education and Youth Development again indicating the least need for improvement, and Arts/Culture/Heritage indicating the most need for improvement.

**Table 21 Performance Ratings - Board/Management Committee**

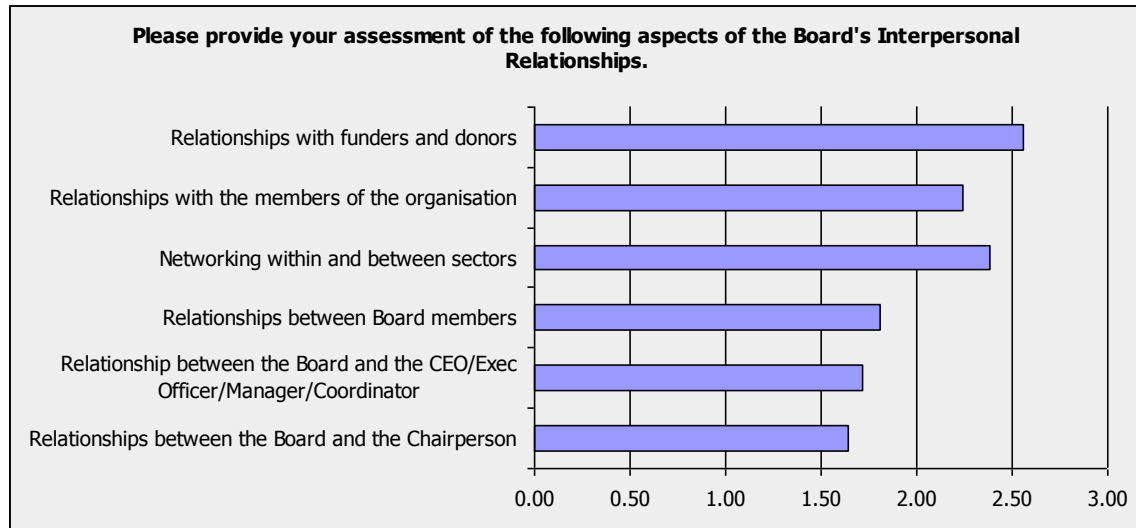
	Community Services/Welfare	Health	Arts/Culture/Heritage	Heritage	Education/ Youth Devel.	Conservation/ Environment/ Animal Welfare	Other	<b>Overall Average</b>
Board composition reflects skills, Knowledge reqd. etc	2.23	2.42	2.71	2.71	3.00	2.33	2.62	2.39
Constitution permits an appropriate mix of skills	1.78	1.89	2.71	2.71	2.00	<b>1.33</b>	2.17	1.91
Board members' roles are well defined	<b>1.92</b>	2.42	2.67	2.67	2.00	2.33	2.23	2.09
The chairperson's role is well defined	1.62	1.89	3.00	3.00	<b>1.43</b>	1.67	2.23	1.8
Board members aware of duties, responsibilities, legislation etc	2.26	2.16	3.29	3.29	2.57	<b>2.00</b>	2.62	2.37
Board members committed to requirements of Board position	2.18	<b>2.16</b>	3.14	3.14	3.29	2.67	2.46	2.36

(N)

**NB:** In Table 21, 1 = Little improvement required and 5 = significant improvement required.

Figure 22 summarises participants' ratings of the Boards' inter-personal relationship for the survey population as a whole. Interestingly, there is a clear distinction perceived in terms of the relative ineffectiveness of the Board's external relationships (funders and donors, networking with and between sectors and with the members of the organisation) compared with the more effective internal relationships (Board members, CEO and Board, and CEO and Chair).

**Figure 22 Rating of Board inter-personal relationships**



This data was analysed by sector in Figure 23. Relationships with networks, funders and donors, and members of the organisation were consistently seen as requiring more improvement, across all sectors. The best relationships were generally observed within the Conservation/Environment and Animal Welfare sector. (The exceptions are Relationships with networks and with funder and donors) However, it should be noted that there were relatively few respondents from across these sectors, so the results must be interpreted with caution.

**Table 23**

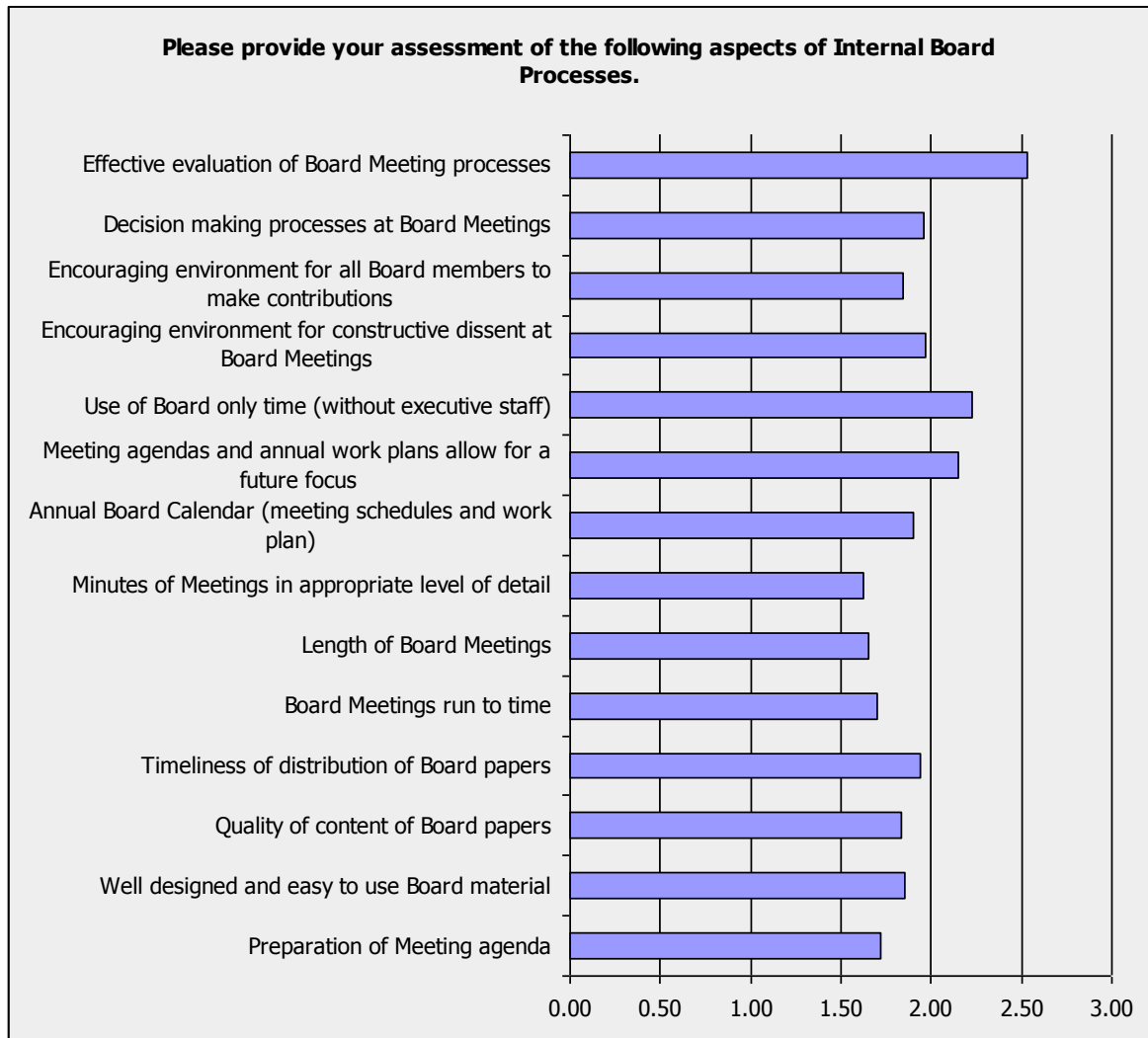
**Rating of the Board's Interpersonal Relationships**

Relationship between/with:	Community Services/Welfare	Health	Arts/Culture/Heritage	Education/Youth Devel.	Conservation/Environment/Animal Welfare	Other	<b>Overall Average</b>
	The Board and the Chairperson	1.61	1.53	1.86	2.33	1.33	1.69
The Board and the CEO/Exec Officer/Manager/Coordinator	1.57	1.63	2.57	2.00	1.33	2.17	1.72
Board members	1.69	1.68	2.17	2.50	1.67	2.08	1.81
Organisation and the sector (Networks)	<b>2.29</b>	2.37	2.57	2.83	2.67	2.46	2.38
Members of the organisation	2.08	2.21	2.71	2.83	2.00	2.54	2.24
Funders and donors	<b>2.38</b>	2.84	2.71	3.33	2.67	2.69	2.56

**NB:** In Table 23, 1 = Little improvement required and 5 = Significant improvement required.

Figure 24 summarises the survey populations' ratings of their Board's internal processes. Evaluation of Board meeting processes and agendas, and use of Board only time, were deemed to be the areas in most need of improvement. Areas which required least improvement were meeting minutes, length of Board meetings and meetings running to time. In other words, Board meetings are deemed to be run efficiently, but Board meeting process **evaluation** is deemed to be in need of most improvement!

**Figure 24 Rating of Board's internal processes**



These ratings are analysed by sector in Figure 25.

Table 25

## Assessment of Board's Internal Processes

	Community	Health	Arts/Culture/ Heritage	Education/ Youth Devel.	Conservation/ Environment/ Animal Welfare	Other	Overall
	Services/Welfare						Average
	(N)						
Preparation of Meeting agenda	1.61	1.58	2.14	2.00	1.33	2.15	1.72
Well designed and easy to use Board material	1.75	<b>1.53</b>	2.29	2.00	1.67	2.38	1.85
Quality of content of Board papers	1.72	1.47	2.57	2.33	<b>1.33</b>	2.15	1.83
Timeliness of distribution of Board papers	1.88	1.74	2.71	<b>1.50</b>	1.67	2.23	1.94
Board Meetings run to time	1.73	1.58	1.71	2.00	<b>1.33</b>	1.85	1.7
Length of Board Meetings	1.58	1.68	1.83	1.83	<b>1.00</b>	2.08	1.65
Minutes of Meetings in appropriate level of detail	1.61	1.42	1.80	1.83	<b>1.33</b>	2.00	1.62
Annual Board Calendar (meeting schedules & work plan)	1.88	1.68	2.00	2.33	<b>1.00</b>	2.00	1.9
Meeting agendas/annual work plans allow for a future focus	2.11	2.05	2.40	2.17	<b>1.67</b>	2.38	2.15
Use of Board only time (without executive staff)	<b>2.14</b>	2.18	3.17	2.33	2.33	2.15	2.23
Board meetings provide environment for constructive dissent	2.00	1.63	2.00	2.50	<b>1.33</b>	2.08	1.97
All Board members encouraged to contribute	1.88	1.47	2.00	2.17	<b>1.33</b>	2.00	1.84
Decision making processes at Board Meetings	1.91	1.74	2.17	2.33	<b>1.67</b>	2.38	1.96
Effective evaluation of Board Meeting processes	2.49	2.53	3.33	2.50	<b>2.33</b>	2.38	2.53

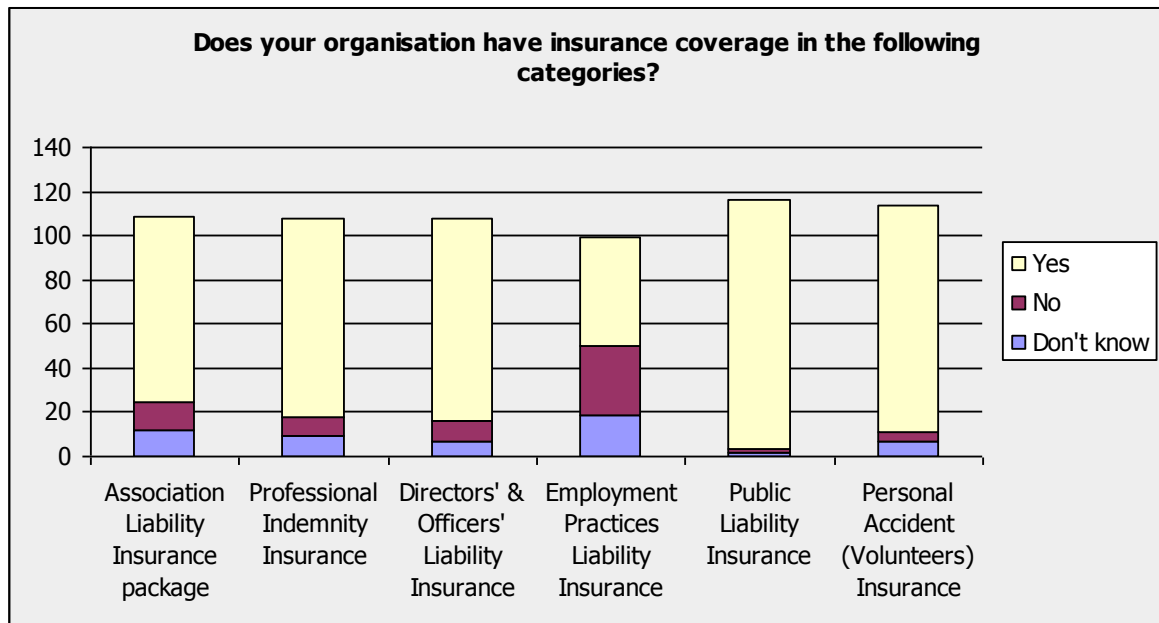
**NB:** In Table 25, 1 = Little improvement required and 5 = significant improvement required.

Again, Conservation/Environment and Animal Welfare sector participants required least improvement to their Board processes, while Arts/Culture/Heritage was most critical.

## Insurances

Participant organisations are reasonably well covered by insurance, virtually all having Public Liability insurance and the vast majority having insurance for Personal Accident. Significant proportions also had insurance for Association Liability, Professional Indemnity and Director's Liability. (See Figure 26.)

**Figure 26 Insurance Coverage**

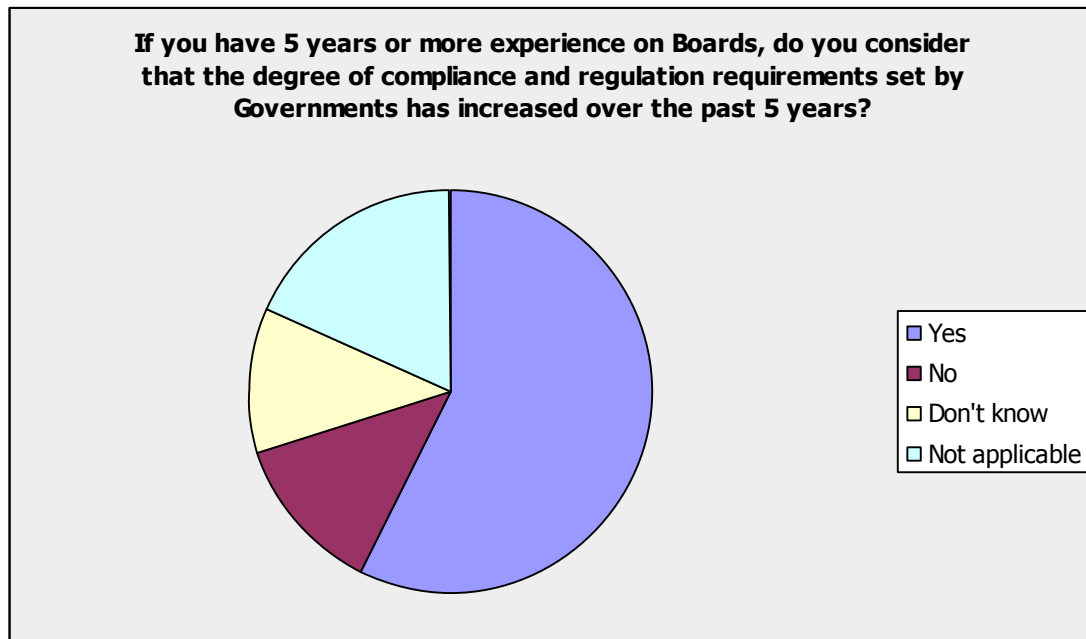


Interestingly, a small proportion admits to not knowing whether the organisation has these insurances.

## Impact of Compliance and Regulation

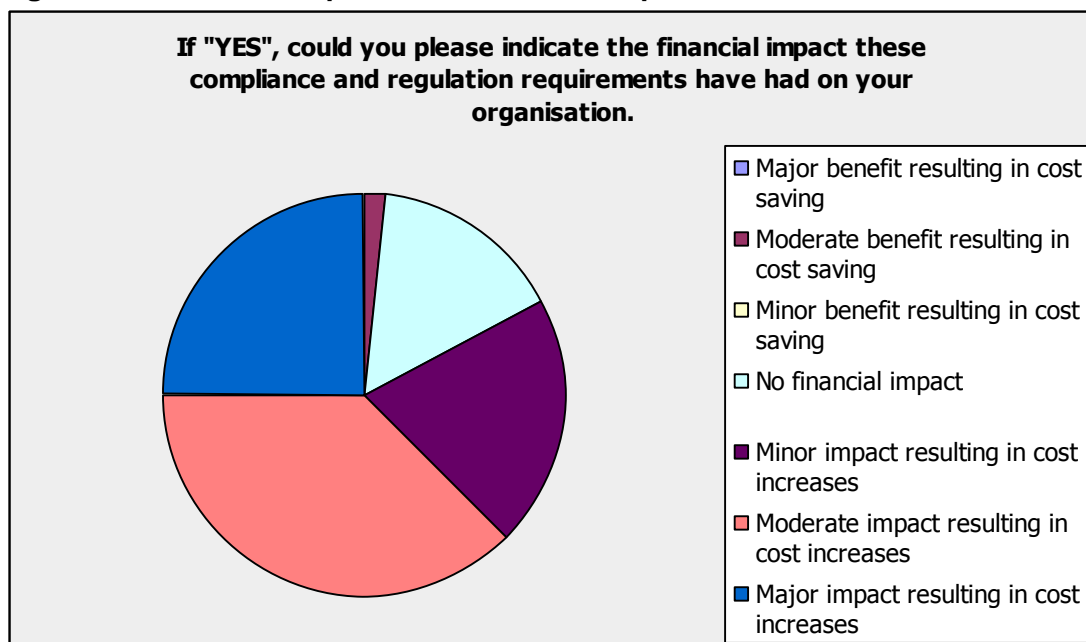
Participants agree that the degree of compliance and regulation has significantly increased over the past 5 years (Figure 27).

**Figure 27 Level of Regulation and Compliance**



The majority of respondents indicated that there had been a moderate to major financial impact as a result of increased compliance requirements. (Figure 28.)

**Figure 28 - Financial Impact of Increased Compliance**



Only 1.6% of respondents indicated that increased regulation was of benefit, 15.6% said that it had no financial impact but the overwhelming majority, 82.8% agreed that increased compliance and regulation requirements had some financial impact on the organisation. Most of these participants however felt the impact was moderate. Additionally there were no responses to the options of 'Major benefit resulting in cost saving' or 'Minor benefit resulting in cost saving' to the participants' organisation for this survey question.

## Verbatim Comments on Compliance and Regulatory Costs

Participants offered a wide range of comments about the impact of increased regulation and compliance.

“I have worked with (but not been a member of) the Board for 5+ years, under both ASIC & Associations requirements. I think the accountability requirements and governance requirements are becoming clearer through case law, and the extent to which legislation has increased compliance obligations - these changes are largely warranted.”

“The processes have increased dramatically, but I doubt if compliance is connected to improved client outcomes. Most government compliance seems designed to allow one arm of govt to check up on another to a level that interferes with the work of the organisation without really improving accountability, compliance or good governance”

“We changed to a Company Limited by Guarantee. This is a good thing.”

“Necessary for tender compliance, and because of legal and other requirements from operation as service provider.”

“Aged Care is very highly regulated along with usual Board governance requirements.”

“While our organisation is incorporated under an act of parliament that requires minimal external compliance reporting, the organisation is preparing for incorporation as a company limited by guarantee and the consequential compliance that requires.”

“It's only in the last 5 years that I've had the pleasure of an encounter with WorkCover which has been something of a rude shock.”

“We are being over run by bureaucrats”

“At times we have problems with Board members (conflict of interest) but there doesn't seem to be any way to reprimand people about this if they are not divulged etc.”

“Funding bodies are demanding more onerous detail and time spent on applications, project planning milestones and progress reporting that is at odds with the relatively low level of funding involved. A recent OH&S review revealed a very narrow and legalistic/bureaucratic focus with scant regard to effectiveness. It was a form review more in keeping with a large organisation industrial organisation.”

“A major benefit with attendant costs - my view is that not-for-profits - especially those seeking donations - have a moral as well as legal obligation to comply with regulation. They should be transparent and they should be accountable BUT it must be recognised that this does come at a very real cost: you need to have people with the right skills and knowledge to ensure you meet your compliance obligations and frequently that means contracting in skills or paying higher salaries; as well, the time factor consumes resources, so while you are working on your compliance you are not working on your 'core' business. This 'big picture' of the costs (and benefits) of compliance needs to be better understood by the government and community alike.”

“Significant proportion of senior management time is spent in reporting, often repetitively, and in formats which are designed by central bureaucrats. I distrust the accuracy of reporting especially as this is supposedly used for planning government funding.”

“A significant chunk of my time as CEO is spent on compliance and regulatory matters. Sometimes directors don't understand why it's necessary and can complain you are not

spending time on raising money, or that you are being nit picking, when really you are ensuring that systems are in place and adhered to so that they don't suffer penalties.”

“Insurance and quality assurance accreditation costs high. Improved financial and computer data packages costly. Some assistance from government funding.”

“The Productivity Commission has recently documented the cost of compliance for aged care providers and made recommendations about reform”

“Anticipate better governance and management structures will position the organisation well for the future at some cost increase in administration.”

“The concept of individual responsibility of an employee seems to have been lost in the practice of WorkCover - who believes that no one ever died because of pilot error but only from airline error? An organisation as small as ours has to employ a senior person full time just to cope with compliance issues; keeping policies up to date; ensuring adequate training etc, etc”

“We have had to employ a person (\$63,000) to deal with safety regulation.”

“Cost to organisation in time spent by Company Manager in ensuring compliance has significantly increased over the years.”

“Most of our work is performed by volunteers under the direction of paid coordinators and staff. Funding received barely covers admin, bureaucratic, room hire, transport, project reporting, compliance and planning costs. Govt funding (usually but not always) increases at inflation rate but this often fails to cover award increases of staff, forcing us to seek alternative sources, which in itself results in an increasingly complex collection of many small specific purpose grants and projects located in different sites resulting in increased costs, but which provides an opportunity for cost sharing, especially of shared admin costs.”

## **Additional Insights and Perspectives – Verbatim Comments**

The following section contains additional verbatim general comments made by respondents regarding the survey.

### **Governance**

“The sector needs more professionalism and accountability in the small and medium subsets (the large ones are pretty much on the same playing field as corporates and government). However, that does come at a cost and this cost needs to be recognised as a legitimate cost that cannot be separated from 'core' mission. “

“In effect, the Board is the manager of fund raising and volunteers, and has little input to the goals and objectives process. In fact, despite pleading from the Board, there are no goals and objectives at the moment, and there has not been for the past 5 years.”

“It is frustrating when charities use misleading language to suggest e.g. 90% of funds raised go to the cause ... what does this mean? Isn't administration essential to the sustainability of the organisation so that it can continue in its 'cause'? Equally it is frustrating when media or members of the public regard things like office equipment, IT etc as 'overheads'. “

“I think that people nominate for these bodies with no doubt good intentions but their lack of skill and knowledge on what they are supposed to be doing often hinder the running of the organisation.”

“I think all Not for Profit organisations where Board members are elected they should not be allowed to stand unless they have a basic standard they need to meet, e.g. Computer Literate, able to communicate efficiently in all forms, oral, written and word processor, have undertaken and completed successfully a course for Board members and can show that their appointment will not be a conflict of interest in what they are doing.”

“We need to have a modern understanding of what operating a modern, compliant, accountable charity involves - and that includes accepting the legitimacy of paid staff.”

“The new Associations Incorporation Act makes some good improvements on the 1984 Act. Charitable Fundraising legislation is hideous! - especially for national charities which have to run separate compliance programs for each state.”

### **Board relationships**

“I find working to the board the least pleasant part of my role. “

“If we had paid employees instead of board members my time would be far more productively spent. “

“I have some really good and lovely board members, but generally speaking none of them, particularly our current and previous Chairs, can devote the amount of time required to their duties, meaning that things just don't get done properly, or at all. “

“Having had this first experience of being a CEO working directly to a board, I never want to do it again and will make sure that in my next role I am well away from dealing with the board.”

“As the director it's hard to separate out the board stuff and directors comments.”

“Better quality Board members would save NFP organisations a lot of money particularly when there are Australian wide members, and it would also cut down on the number of current Board Members.”

### **The survey**

“An interesting set of questions. We look forward to hearing the results.”

“A good easy to follow and answer survey. Well done”

### **Board Role**

“When add in service on sub-committees and time allocated to organisation tasks/events apart from attendance etc. requirements for Board meetings, then voluntary time required as Board member would easily exceed 20 hours per month.”

“As the Board answers to the Army, because it is an Army Museum, it does not have a lot of power to influence the direction of the museum. The military know it all.”

“There is definitely a case for not letting military personnel manage anything to do with 'civilians', until they have had 5 or more years experience in the marketplace.”

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Conclusions

1. Overall standards of governance appeared to be good.
2. Number of board meetings, board size, committees, insurances etc, was within acceptable bounds.
3. Recruitment of board members was mainly achieved by networking or by founding the organisation.
4. Board composition and commitment were identified by all sectors as needing major improvement.
5. A key issue is the relative ineffectiveness of the Board's external relationships ie between funders and donors, networking with and between sectors and with the stakeholders of the organisation.
6. Board meetings are deemed to be run efficiently, but Board meeting process evaluation is deemed to be in need of improvement.
7. Evaluation of Board meeting processes and agendas, and use of Board only time, were deemed to be the areas in most need of improvement.
8. The overwhelming majority, 82.8% indicated that increased compliance and regulation had had a negative financial impact, but most respondents felt the impact was moderate and that there was a need for additional regulation.
9. Ratings of performance were satisfactory although it is worth considering that respondents also indicated that there is little evaluation of Board processes.

## Recommendations

For NFP organisations to operate effectively they should invest in 'best practice' models of board procedures. The recommendations below outline some of the issues that need to be addressed by the sector.

6. A dialogue should be opened between the NFP sector and Funding bodies to increase the understanding and value of effective board operation. The Centre can lead this debate in volunteering organisations however it should be wide spread throughout the NFP sector and lead by government.
7. Funding applications should include a component dedicated by NFPs assist those governed by boards/management committees improve board member recruitment practices and training.
8. Funding applications should include a component dedicated by NFPs assist those governed by boards/management committees improve board training.
9. Boards should consider regular performance evaluation.
10. The Centre should debate with the Government the necessity of regulatory changes and any adverse financial impact changes may have.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: List of respondent organisations classified as “Other”.

List of Organisations classified as “Other” in the report data tables

1. Combination of family services / culture / youth development
2. Professional/Personal and Social Development
3. Non government organisation peak body
4. Support & advocacy for our client/community groups
5. Aged Care - Retirement Village
6. Religious institution
7. Sports training and Competition for athletes with an Intellectual disability, compassing several categories above such as Community Services, health, education and youth development
8. Sport (2)
9. Disability
10. Marine search and rescue
11. Seniors and technology
13. Overseas aid and development
14. Philanthropy
15. Mental health
16. Stud Book for horses

**Note:** One nominated “other” but did not identify the type of organisation.

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## Appendix 3: Survey Instrument - Questionnaire

### The Centre for Volunteering's 2009 Governance Study

#### Introduction

Objective: to study the performance of Boards/Management Committees of the not-for-profit (NFP) sector currently practising in NSW.

This online survey is designed to collect your views about the level of experience of Board members, your Boards' effectiveness in recruitment and training of Board members, relationships on your Board, effective processes concerning governance and overall performance of the Board.

Please note, that it is important that views expressed are the views of individual Board members and/or the CEO, not the collective view of the organisation.

The system of collecting information that is used for this survey guarantees that individual data is totally confidential and cannot be traced to any individual or organisation.

This survey was designed to be completed in 5-10 minutes and should not take more than 15 minutes.

If you have to interrupt the survey you will be able to come back later and continue from where you stopped.

You may also enter a draw to receive one year's free membership of The Centre for Volunteering for your organisation. There are ten free memberships available (one per organisation). Click for [Member Benefits](#). If you would like to participate in the draw and have completed the survey please send an email to [Tony Frew](#) with the name of your organisation and contact details. This preserves confidentiality of your survey responses. Thank you very much for your time.

## Organisational Details

### 1. To which category does your organisation belong?

- Community Services/Welfare
- Health
- Arts/Culture/Heritage
- Education/Youth Development
- Conservation/Environmental/Animal Welfare
- Indigenous
- Other

(please specify)

### 2. In this organisation are you the (Please tick all applicable)

- CEO
- Chairperson
- Board/Management Committee Member

**3.  
How  
many  
members  
are  
on  
your  
Board/Management  
Committee  
(include  
current  
vacancies)?**

No.

**4. How many paid employees (expressed as full time equivalents - FTEs) did your organisation have in 2008?**

- Less than 20
- Between 20 and 200
- More than 200

**5. Approximately how many volunteers did your organisation engage over 2008?**

- Less than 20
- Between 20 and 200
- Between 201 and 1000
- More than 1000

## The Centre for Volunteering's 2009 Governance Study

**6. If your organisation has more than one site in NSW, how many are located in:**

	Less than 20	Between 20 and 200	More than 200
Sydney metropolitan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regional	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rural-Remote	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**7. How does your organisation attract or identify new Board/Management Committee members? (If applicable, tick more than one)**

- By invitation/networking
- Board selection committee
- External advertising
- Recruitment agencies
- Board register matching services (e.g. by NCOSS, FIDO, OUR COMMUNITY)
- Other

(please specify)

\*\*\* Please go to Question 11, if you are responding as the CEO and not as a Board/Management Committee member.\*\*\*

**8. How did you become a Board/Management Committee member of this organisation?**

- Founder of organisation
- By invitation/networking
- Board selection process
- External advertising
- Recruitment agencies
- Board register matching services
- Other

(please specify)

**9. What kind of recompense do you receive for your Board/Management Committee contribution? (If applicable, tick more than one)**

- Reimbursement of expenses
- Remuneration as Board member
- Remuneration as chairperson
- None
- Other

(please specify)

**10. Can you please provide an estimate of how many hours on average you spend monthly on your Board commitments to this organisation (incl. preparation, meeting and travel time).**

- Less than 5
- 5 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21+

**11. How many full Board meetings a year does this organisation**

Have:

Need to have (in your view):

**12. How long have you been a Board/Management Committee member of this organisation?**

**\*\*\* Please do not answer if you are the CEO unless you are also a Board/Management Committee member.\*\*\***

- Less than a year
- 1 - 3 years
- 3 - 5 years
- More than 5 years

**13. How many Boards/Management Committees have you served on? Please include past and present. (No.)**

Not-for-profit   
Government   
Private/For-profit

**14. Does your organisation provide induction for new members of the Board/Management Committee?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**15. If "YES", what sort of induction is used (If applicable, tick more than one)**

- Low cost eLearning
- Self paced eLearning
- Classroom training
- Director's courses
- Briefing and training within your organisation
- Other

(please specify)

**16. In your view, how important is training for Board/Management Committee members?**

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Quite important	Very important
Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**17. If you have tried to access educational or other material to assist in your Board performance and functions, where did you access the material? (If applicable, tick more than one)**

- Internet
- Own organisation's training
- Library
- Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Not applicable
- Other

(please specify)

## Governance Activities

Please feel free to make comments for the following questions in the space provided.

### 18. Please provide a rating for the following aspects of Board/Management Committee Membership of your organisation.

	NO improvement required	Improvement required	SIGNIFICANT improvement required
Board composition reflects the skills, knowledge and experience needed to achieve the organisation's purpose	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent do you feel your constitution for the Board/Management Committee allows for an appropriate mix of members of the organisation and non-members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Board members' roles are well defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The chairperson's role is well defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Board members are aware of their duties and responsibilities, the legislation under which the Board operates, and there is appropriate documentation of policies and procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Board members are committed to the requirements of their Board positions, including keeping up to date with issues and trends in the relevant sector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments:

### 19. Please provide a rating for the performance of your Board/Management Committee in Risk Management and Legislative Compliance.

	NO improvement required	Improvement required	SIGNIFICANT improvement required
Compliance with Incorporation or similar regulations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Audits (internal and external)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disclosure requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Handling of potential conflicts of interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial risk (Viability and sustainability of fund raising)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Criminal risk (Fraud, theft)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments:

**20. Please provide a rating for the following aspects of Performance of your Board/Management Committee.**

	NO improvement required	Improvement required	SIGNIFICANT improvement required
Setting clear direction for the organisation in terms of purpose and strategic direction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effective management of financial responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effective and timely communication to all Board members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Board leadership and chairing of meetings is effectively managed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Board is active and forward thinking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effective evaluation system of Board and Board members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments:

**21. Please provide your assessment of the following aspects of the Board's Interpersonal Relationships.**

	NO improvement required	Improvement required	SIGNIFICANT improvement required
Relationships between the Board and the Chairperson	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationship between the Board and the CEO/Exec Officer/Manager/Coordinator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships between Board members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Networking within and between sectors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships with the members of the organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships with funders and donors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments:

## The Centre for Volunteering's 2009 Governance Study

### 22. Please provide your assessment of the following aspects of Internal Board Processes.

	NO improvement required		Improvement required		SIGNIFICANT improvement required
Preparation of Meeting agenda	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Well designed and easy to use Board material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of content of Board papers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timeliness of distribution of Board papers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Board Meetings run to time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Length of Board Meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Minutes of Meetings in appropriate level of detail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Annual Board Calendar (meeting schedules and work plan)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meeting agendas and annual work plans allow for a future focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of Board only time (without executive staff)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging environment for constructive dissent at Board Meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging environment for all Board members to make contributions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decision making processes at Board Meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effective evaluation of Board Meeting processes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments:

### 23. Which subcommittees does your organisation have? (If applicable, tick more than one)

- Risk
- Financial
- Audit
- Fundraising
- Appointments and remuneration
- Not applicable
- Other

(please specify)

**24. Does your organisation have insurance coverage in the following categories?**

	Yes	No	Don't know
Association Liability Insurance package	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional Indemnity Insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Directors' & Officers' Liability Insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employment Practices Liability Insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Liability Insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal Accident (Volunteers) Insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**25. If you have 5 years or more experience on Boards, do you consider that the degree of compliance and regulation requirements set by Governments has increased over the past 5 years?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not applicable

Comments:

## The Centre for Volunteering's 2009 Governance Study

**26. If "YES", could you please indicate the financial impact these compliance and regulation requirements have had on your organisation.**

- Major benefit resulting in cost saving
- Moderate benefit resulting in cost saving
- Minor benefit resulting in cost saving
- No financial impact
- Minor impact resulting in cost increases
- Moderate impact resulting in cost increases
- Major impact resulting in cost increases

Comments:

**27. The Centre for Volunteering would welcome any comments you would like to make concerning this survey or any of the questions. Thank you.**

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## Thank you for completing this survey

You have now completed the survey - thank you for your time and effort!

Just a reminder about the three aspects mentioned in the introduction.

1. This survey is totally confidential and responses will not identify any particular organisation or person.
2. A report and resource listing based on this research project and the data collected will be made available to all respondents.
3. You may also enter a draw to receive one year's free membership of The Centre for Volunteering for your organisation. There are ten free memberships available (one per organisation). Click for [Member Benefits](#). If you would like to participate in the draw and have completed the survey please send an email to [Tony Frew](#) with the name of your organisation and contact details. This preserves confidentiality of your survey responses.